

Annual Report 2014 (Delegates' Assembly March 20, 2015)

In preparation of the new Federal Law on Financial Aid to Universities and Cooperation in Matters Relating to Universities in Switzerland (Hochschulförderungsgesetz HFKG), actionuni der Schweizer Mittelbau/actionuni le corps intermédiaire académique suisse/actionuni il collegio intermediario academico svizzero has completely restructured and reorganized in 2014. In the presence of all member organizations of actionuni the new statutes were adopted on February 3, 2014. They now also allow the participation of non-professorial academic staff organizations of universities of applied sciences and universities of teacher education in actionuni.

An important task of actionuni in 2014 was to support the creation and development of non-professorial academic staff organizations of universities of applied sciences and universities of teacher education. At the Extraordinary Delegates' Assembly of November 7, 2014, four new non-professorial academic staff organizations of universities of applied sciences and universities of teacher education could be admitted. Thus actionuni represents 8 of 12 universities / ETH / EPFL, 4 of 8 universities of applied sciences and 3 universities of teacher education. The Board could now also be fully appointed on November 7, 2014.

Members of the Board have attended several events in 2014, such as the meeting of the Swiss Science and Innovation Council SSIC on "Academic Career Development at Swiss Universities: Are more permanent jobs needed?", the event "It is our Future - now we are talking" organized by Euresearch and a meeting of the national Union of Students of Switzerland VSS-UNES-USU, entitled "PhD@FH".

actionuni is represented in the Board of Trustees of the Swiss National Science Foundation (SNF). In 2014, as an exception, there were two meetings - instead of one. This was, inter alia, due to the partial revision of the statutes of the Board of Trustees, which is also resulting from the new HFKG. Among other changes, the Board of Trustees will be slimmed down - that is, have fewer members. However, the position of the non-professorial academic staff in the SNF is non-controversial, the actionuni-seat in the board is also secured in future. Further, following previous annual meetings, there was again a meeting between actionuni and the SNF office.

In 2014 three working groups were formed – while the WG Finances could not yet set to work. The following two groups made the political work of actionuni:

AG Einwanderungsinitiative (WG Immigration Initiative)

In 2014, the Swiss population voted upon two major referendums with significant influence on Swiss immigration and thus also on negotiations with the European Commission on the participation in European programs, such as the study exchange program Erasmus+ and the research program Horizon2020.

With the acceptance of the mass immigration initiative in February 2014, the EU stopped Switzerland's full association in the Horizon2020 program, leading to serious financing issues for Swiss researchers. But not only financial matters were of concern; EU research grants are prestigious and offer good networking opportunities.

In November 2014, the Ecopop initiative was up for election and the working group of actionuni published a press release outlining the issues and consequences following the potential acceptance of the initiative. The press release was complimented by statements from some of actionuni's member organizations and several other Swiss research institutions.

The Ecopop initiative was rejected by the Swiss population, allowing Switzerland to sign a partial association of the Horizon2020 program, which will last until the end of 2016. For the upcoming years 2015 and 2016, the working group will keep a close eye on the developments regarding future association of Switzerland in Horizon2020 and be in contact with the involved institutions wherever possible.

AG Bundesratsbericht (WG Federal Council's report)

In August 2014 actionuni invited representatives of all member institutions to a meeting to inform about and to discuss the „Bundesratsbericht“ (Massnahmen zur Förderung des wissenschaftlichen Nachwuchses in der Schweiz, Bericht des Bundesrats in Erfüllung des Postulats WBK-SR (12.3343)). In this context, actionuni has formed a workgroup, named AG Bundesratsbericht, with the aim to develop ideas for the implementation of appropriate measures supporting the careers of the non-professorial academic staff and to accompany current developments. Since then, Georg Winterberger, the president of actionuni, has sent a letter to Silvia Studinger (SBFI, department universities) to inform about the discussion on the topic within actionuni and to offer our active contribution to future work groups. Thanks to personal presentation, Georg Winterberger and Caspar Hirschi (Professor of General History at the School of Humanities and Social Sciences, St. Gallen, CH, and former member of “Junge Forschende”), convinced the “Weiterbildungskommission (WBK)-Nationalrat” to submit the Motion 15.3000 (see below) to the Nationalrat (National Council) in January 2015.

Various members of actionuni asked the directorate of their universities for commenting the “Bundesratsbericht”. Overall, the directorates confirmed to have taken notice. In several cases, the directorates returned questions about possible measures to the non-professorial academic staff representatives. In a general agreement, directorates stated a lack of money. In case of structural changes, there would be need for additional funding.

The AG Bundesratsbericht exchanged thoughts on the topic via e-mail and met once at the occasion of the extraordinary meeting of actionuni-delegates on 7th of November in 2014. During this meeting and later by e-mail, the workgroup realized a divergence of situations and interests between universities, universities of applied science (Fachhochschule, FH) and teacher education universities (Pädagogische Hochschule, PH) relating to career profiles and terms of employment. For example PHs: due to a relatively short institutional history - founding of PHs as training institutions for teachers on tertiary level has taken place only in the last 10 years - comprehensive scientific career profiles are yet to be defined there. However, teacher education universities (PHs) as well as universities of applied science (FHs) bring experience regarding the "third-space", the interface between research, teaching and administration to the table. This illustrates the fact that different measures according to the type of university would be required for improving career structures, while exchange of ideas across the PHs, FHs and universities could be extremely fruitful. Common interests of fundamental importance are

- More permanent instead of temporary positions with adequate wages.
- More assistant professor positions with tenure track (APTT) are required but will not solve the general problems of the non-professorial academic staff career structure.
- Also positions different from professorships should receive appropriate appreciation within the universities and offer possibilities for further steps in a career.

Official statements and activities between August 2014 and January 2015 were as follows:

- “Anreizprogramm für einen Umbau der Karrierestrukturen an Schweizer Hochschulen”, Postulat 14.4006, submitted to the Ständerat (Council of States) on 6th of November 2014 by

the “Kommission für Wissenschaft, Bildung und Kultur SR” (Committee for Science, Education and Culture (CSEC-S)), accepted by the “Ständerat” (Council of States) on the 4th of December 2014.

- “Förderung des wissenschaftlichen Nachwuchses in der Schweiz”, Motion 15.3000, submitted by the “Kommission für Wissenschaft, Bildung und Kultur NR” (Committee for Science, Education and Culture (CSEC-N)) to the Nationalrat (National Council) on 15th of January 2015